

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3241

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to creating opportunities for students to earn a meaningful high school diploma through college and career readiness centers.

Brief Description: Creating opportunities to obtain a diploma through college and career readiness centers.

Sponsors: Representatives Jarrett, Fromhold, Rodne, Cox, Clibborn, Ormsby, Tom, Talcott, Haigh, Roberts, Priest, Morrell, Springer, Hunt, Green and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/06, 2/2/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the State Board of Education to develop a definition of a meaningful highschool diploma, based on college and career readiness standards, and make recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2007.
- Requires school districts to contract with Educational Service Districts or community or technical colleges to deliver programs through college and career readiness centers that enable students over 16 but under 21 to earn a meaningful high school diploma.
- Requires colleges to deliver the center programs and receive reimbursement under the terms of the contract. Students are reported as district enrollment and receive a diploma from the school district.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

High School Graduation Requirements. The State Board of Education (SBE) establishes minimum high school graduation requirements for public schools. Students must complete at least 19 credits in specified content areas, do a culminating project, and prepare a high school and beyond plan. Beginning with the class of 2008, students will also need to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) by meeting the state academic standards in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Local school districts may establish additional requirements. Students can enroll in public schools until they complete a diploma or turn 21.

High School Programs in Community and Technical Colleges. Washington's community and technical colleges have a broad mission that includes workforce training, academic degrees, and adult education. The colleges also offer three types of high school programs:

High School Completion. High School Completion is a program to enable adults to earn a regular high school diploma issued by the college. Students can take both high school and college level courses to complete their requirements. The SBE graduation requirements apply to these diplomas, except that students over the age of 21 are exempt from the CAA under SBE rules. Students under age 18 need a release from their high school to enroll.

Drop-Out Retrieval. Seven colleges offer high school programs under contract with a local school district for students aged 16 to 21 to make up the credits they need to graduate. Students who complete the school district's graduation requirements earn their diploma from the district.

Technical High Schools. Bates, Lake Washington, and Clover Park Technical Colleges each operate a program for juniors and seniors that offers career-technical training and courses necessary to receive a diploma.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Meaningful High School Diploma. The State Board of Education is directed to develop and propose a definition of a meaningful high school diploma. The definition must reflect that high school graduates need to be ready for college and employment; incorporate college readiness standards in at least English and mathematics; and focus on knowledge, skills, and abilities rather than courses, credits, and test scores. The proposed definition is submitted to the legislative Education Committees by December 1, 2007.

College and Career Readiness Centers. School districts must enter into contracts with Educational Service Districts (ESDs) or community or technical colleges to deliver courses or programs through college and career readiness centers that enable students over 16 but under 21 to earn a meaningful high school diploma. The students are reported as school district enrollment. Colleges are reimbursed for each enrolled student as provided in the contract.

A student who is over 16 but under 21 has the option to attend a center or remain in a high school or other school district program.

Community and technical colleges must make the centers available for students at no tuition or fee and at locations other than the high school campus. Center programs are available during the day, in the evening, on weekends, and during the summer. The programs are age-appropriate, and colleges must attempt to accommodate students who are working while they attend the program.

The school district issues a diploma to a student enrolled in a college and career readiness center based on completion of all state and local graduation requirements.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

School districts may also contract with ESDs to offer college and career readiness centers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This proposal provides a solution for the dilemma of keeping older, struggling students in a high school setting. It creates an entitlement for all students to get a meaningful high school diploma; ultimately this is the state's paramount duty. The goal is to make a high school diploma mean what it should: that students are prepared to go on with the next phase of life, whether that be college or the workplace. These two pathways are no longer divergent. Some students will need the benefit of extra time, and this learning time should take place in age-appropriate settings. This is a great start for a huge problem; the target population is enormous when you start to consider the dropout rate, particularly among ethnic minority students. Three ESDs already offer these programs and they would like to be a part of the solution. It is particularly challenging for older students with language barriers to achieve a diploma by the end of grade 12.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Jarrett, prime sponsor; Theresa Kimball, Centralia College; Norma Cuevas and Anglita Chavez, Latino/a Educational Achievement Project; Norm Wisner, Educational School Districts; and Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.